

## **State of the City 2007: The Future is Here.**

Imagine a city of thriving neighborhoods, dotted with parks, linked with trails and anchored by a bustling and revitalized urban center.

Imagine businesses eager to locate in one of many enterprising, rejuvenated business districts and bringing with them jobs, opportunities, and investments.

Imagine seniors, small children, families, and immigrants all making their way to a better life in a city that has become economically and socially strong.

Imagine a city that is regarded as a model of how to get things done.

Imagine a city government that is active, effective, and responsive to every neighborhood and community.

We don't have to imagine this as the future of Renton anymore because that future is here, RIGHT NOW!

It was not too long ago when Renton was a running laugh line on "Almost Live." Now our city is featured on the front pages of local and national media including the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune. Renton is serious about business.

In the last year alone, some 440 new companies have located to Renton, with 1,338 employees.

People from all over are choosing Renton as the place to start their business.

One example is Ruben Chen, who opened a new coffee shop in the Highlands. He worked hard to prepare and open his business this past year. Ruben said that he wanted his coffee shop to be a place where people could relax with friends - a place that feels like home. He even named it after his six-year old son. Thank you, Ruben, for making Vince's Coffee Shop a part of our community.

We've kept the city on sound economic footing. In just a few years we've gone from fiscal challenges to the highest city budget in history.

As a result, our bond rating improved from A+ to AA-, which lowers our cost when we sell bonds or borrow money.

We are recruiting and retaining several businesses to ensure a diversified employment base. These are just a couple of the steps we have taken to make sure Renton continues to benefit from our region's strong economy.

Our hard work has paid off and we will continue to strive for more.

And 2007 looks to be on pace to exceed 2006. The future is here, RIGHT NOW!

## **Renton's Economic Forecast**

Renton's economic future continues to shine brightly. The Economic Forecast Report for Renton, prepared by Douglas Pedersen and Associates, indicates that Renton's vibrant economy will continue to expand. For those of you that like the numbers, this next part is for you...

Renton's taxable retail sales increased by almost 10 percent in 2006 and is expected to increase another 7.5 percent in 2007. At this rate of growth, Renton will surpass King County's taxable retail sales receipts in the next few years.

One of the remarkable characteristics of the Renton economy is the sustained and relatively strong growth in population.

Over the seven-year period from 1999 to 2005, the city's population growth averaged 2.8 percent per year.

The number of permits issued for new houses in Renton between 1999 and 2005, was 55 percent greater than in the previous seven-year period. By comparison, during that same period King County had an increase of "only" 12 percent. Renton is a desirable place to live whether you are getting your first job, raising a family or enjoying retirement.

Rapid growth at Boeing is expected to lift total Renton employment. Job gains are expected to continue in 2007 and 2008. Puget Sound should see nearly 15,000 new aerospace jobs, an 8.5 percent annual growth rate.

For the second consecutive year, the 737 program achieved a record with net orders of 729 airplanes. The previous record for the 737 program was 569 in 2005.

Boeing's delivery rate is expected at a plane a day in 2007-08.

Renton and The Boeing Company have shared a rich history for over sixty years and I want to thank them for their continued investment in Renton.

Outside of Boeing, employment is expected to grow about 2.5 percent per year in 2007 and 2008.

For the next few years, the rate of increase in Renton jobs is expected to be 1.5 times that of King County. Home sales are also expected to increase in 2008.

We are one of, if not the, most exciting, welcoming and dynamic city in the Puget Sound region. We imagined this future and the future is here, NOW!

## **Leveraging Every Dollar We Spend**

We are making wise investments, and making sure we leverage every dollar we spend with federal, state and local funding.

From 2004 to 2006, we collected almost \$65 million in grants, and other revenues from various federal, state and local agencies.

We lobbied hard for this money and are investing these funds back into Renton.

Every year, more and more local businesses and organizations are contributing to community events and causes.

This shows how devoted our local businesses and organizations are to the people of Renton – they have worked hard to give back to the community – from creating a scholarship for youth to supporting Renton River Days.

From mega projects such as improvements to the I-405/SR 167 interchange or neighborhood projects such as the playground improvements at Kennydale Park, every dollar we spent got us several more in return.

## **2007 Budget**

The 2007 budget total is \$210,861,478 (two hundred and ten million, eight hundred and sixty one thousand, and four hundred and seventy eight dollars). We are Moving Renton Forward! This year's budget focuses on basic services, public safety, economic growth and community resources.

In addition to more police and public safety employees, we've also added employees to take care of our streets, sewers and basic services.

We have doubled our funding to meet the city's human service needs.

With one of the most ambitious capital improvement plans in recent years, we committed over \$58 million in infrastructure projects – 62% more than last year.

## **Celebrating Our Accomplishments**

That's enough of the numbers. Let me brag a little bit about what Renton has accomplished recently.

### **King County Events Center**

A month ago we found out that Renton was selected as the preferred site by the Sonics and Storm ownership for a multi-purpose events center. What a great moment for Renton!

When I asked Clay Bennett, the owner of the Sonics and Storm, Why Renton?

He said that without doubt Renton was his first choice since he was excited at the expanding economy and the bright future that he foresees in Renton.

The economic opportunities of this events center go far beyond Renton, and could benefit the entire region.

According to a Seattle Center report, the Key Arena hosted 1.1 million visitors in 2005. The spending by visitors and businesses created \$350 million in business activity and 3,252 jobs. The proposed facility in Renton is likely to host significantly more events and more people—probably between 1.4 and 2.4 million visitors each year. By comparison, IKEA alone brings in over 3 million visitors per year.

We know there is a lot of work ahead and due diligence required before we determine if this makes sense for Renton. While we have lots to gain, I think we agree it shouldn't come at any cost. We will not allow our neighborhoods to suffer negative impacts without mitigation, and we will not jeopardize the financial health of the City by investing in this project any more than we can afford.

But irrespective of the outcome this has been a win for Renton. This has shown the world what we knew all along: We are a 'can-do', world-class city, willing to roll up our sleeves and look at possibilities. Five or ten years ago the media reaction to the Sonics' choice of Renton over Bellevue would have been more like,

"Renton? Really?!" This time, there was no surprise reaction – Renton has arrived. The future is here, RIGHT NOW!

### **Our Economy and Businesses**

We will soon be breaking ground for the new home of the Seattle Seahawks. Once again, we are delivering on our vision and are keeping our promise to be the center of opportunity.

Thank you, Seahawks, for choosing Renton as your home.

We have created a dynamic and diversified employment base here. Providence Health Systems has established its offices in Southgate Office Park and will soon employ more than 1,000 workers here. We successfully recruited the Evergreen City Ballet, which now makes the old McLendon building its home. Wizards of the Coast have relocated to new offices, and the FAA is expanding its presence here.

Fairfield Residential will break ground this spring with 900 apartment homes at The Landing. This will be one of Renton's largest residential projects. Target is opening its doors on October 14. Let's all go shopping at The Landing this fall.

We also saw other changes at IKEA. Anders Berglund and Bjorn Bailey, the original owners of the Renton IKEA, decided to retire and IKEA's corporate headquarters took over the management of the Renton store.

IKEA has played a very important role in our community and has made ongoing contributions to local schools and civic causes, including Renton River Days.

It is my pleasure to welcome to Renton, Laurie Helm, the new manager of IKEA Renton. We are excited to work together and continue our partnership.

The construction at the Federal Reserve Building is moving rapidly. I visited their site recently and the cash processing facility in Renton is truly one of a kind. They plan to start operations in early 2008.

Conner Homes broke ground on its 20-acre luxury lakefront residential development just south of the Seahawks site.

Charlie Conner went to high school in Renton and I knew that his company had built over 4,000 homes in a wide range of neighborhoods in King County. I challenged Charlie to come and build something spectacular in Renton.

He did! And as he started this project he said that there is no better parcel of land in the region for homeowners who want to live near and enjoy the shores of Lake Washington.

Our downtown is the heart of our city. This year we have seen an increased prosperity in downtown and are proud to welcome many new businesses. We have significantly increased our downtown revitalization efforts and have partnered with other stakeholders in the community to bring several events downtown.

Andy Alberts from Touchdowns Sportsbar and Grill recently opened his restaurant in Renton and told me that he decided to invest here because he senses a high energy in Renton and believes it's a great place for young people.

We launched our very own video showcasing Renton as the “Center of Opportunity.” The video is yet another symbol of the unique partnership we have created in Renton with the Renton Chamber of Commerce, the Renton School District, Valley Medical Center and Renton Technical College.

### **Our Neighborhoods and Communities**

Last month, our Community Services Department renewed its status as one of only 66 agencies in America to achieve national accreditation. Renton was the first city in Washington State to achieve this recognition and seal of distinction.

Our residents need parks, trails and urban green spaces. This year we will complete construction of the newly named “Heritage Park” on Union Avenue. The park celebrates the community and reflects its past, present and future. With a play structure, climbing boulders, a picnic shelter, sports facilities, and walking paths, this will provide the area residents with a thriving and beautiful park to enjoy.

After over 15 years of hard work we finally broke ground on the Springbrook Creek Mitigation Bank. This project, the first of its kind in Washington, will enhance over 130 acres of wetlands in Renton and will be the ‘Central Park’ of our region in the future as development continues.

Springbrook Creek will also include a boardwalk and an interpretive trail to teach our kids about wetlands and preserving our environmental heritage. The wetland trail will be constructed entirely from recycled materials. ‘Our environmental future is here.’

From tree plantings in spring to Clean and Green Saturdays and Clean Sweep Renton, we’re keeping our city beautiful and taking care of our environment.

Over the course of three Saturdays in June, Clean Sweep Renton has three different events that give our residents the opportunity to reuse, swap, recycle or dump what they can't use.

By reducing waste, and keeping our city and streets clean and green, we help define the unique characteristics of each of our neighborhoods. But equally important is the fact that neighbors meet neighbors and are able to do something for each other and the community. For more information on how you can participate in this year’s program, go to the city’s website at [rentonwa.gov](http://rentonwa.gov).

Our aquatic programs continue to thrive and attract national attention. Henry Moses Aquatic Center had an increase in revenue of 12%. It was also highlighted at the recent conference of the National Parks and Recreation Congress in Seattle and its summer brochure received an award.

For five years in a row the Maplewood Golf Course has been recognized by Golf Digest as one of the “Best Places to Play”.

In Community Services alone we have over 1,568 volunteers contributing the equivalent of over \$515,000 worth of services. We have achieved unprecedented success in our volunteer programs and our neighborhood outreach efforts.

### **Our Infrastructure**

We are both blessed and cursed being the hub of several regional highways. On the up side it makes Renton more accessible to much of the region for residents and businesses. The down side is that we have a lot of regional traffic that creates local transportation problems. We have been working diligently with

state and regional agencies and finally convinced them we need their help to solve the problems. In 2007, construction of over \$350 million in improvements to the I-405, SR 167 corridor through Renton will get started.

We are rebuilding our streets and bridges. We made improvements to the intersection of Duvall Ave. NE and Sunset Blvd. NE. We have also obtained a \$4.7 million grant for the SW 27th/Strander Blvd. project.

In addition to transportation improvements, we are also focusing on delivering high quality drinking water to our community. We opened the new Maplewood Water Treatment Facility to meet the future water needs of our residents.

### **Public Safety**

Most important to the city of Renton and our quality of life are public safety services. We have already taken several steps to strengthen our Police and Fire departments.

Thefts decreased by 24% last year. Since thefts are such a large portion of total crimes, this has resulted in an overall reduction of almost 15% of our Class I crimes.

We are using crime analysis to reduce property crime and have set up a Special Operation Division to help with code enforcement.

We implemented E-police, an online web-based police reporting system that gives officers more time to address community needs while providing the public the option to access services on the Internet. In addition to making it more convenient, from May to December last year, we saved 240 hours of commissioned police officers' time with E-police.

We awarded Officer Larry Strauss with the Medal of Honor. Officer Strauss was injured in the line of duty, and the perpetrator was sentenced to 50 years in prison.

But our work is not done. We continue to find ways to increase the security and reduce crime in the transit center and downtown. We've increased our presence and patrol in the transit center, and continue to work with King County and the downtown community to proactively address this issue.

We have emphasized fire prevention and emergency management. We have hired a new Fire Chief and are one of the only departments in the state that has purchased specialized self-contained breathing apparatus that protects our firefighters against radiation.

We take care of those who care for the community.

I've always said Renton has heart. This year we gave that phrase a whole new meaning. We launched 'Renton Heart Month' a new community awareness campaign to inform citizens about heart attack risks and how to quickly and properly respond to warning signs. We offered free blood pressure checks, blood sugar screenings and CPR/Automatic Access Defibrillator classes.

By the end of February, firefighters had evaluated 1,759 people. They identified 309 with stage 2 high blood pressure and 71 with high blood sugar levels. These people were given alert cards and advised to contact their primary care health provider for follow-up care.

On February 19, Kim Le May and Liz Fast, City of Renton employees, saved the life of a gentleman at the Renton Community Center, thanks to the training provided at Renton Heart Month and by the Renton Fire Department. The message to all of us is this – take care of your health and take this free class so you can learn how to respond properly in the event of an emergency.

### **Our Services**

We have worked hard to deliver what we promised while ensuring efficiency, accountability and effectiveness.

We recently got an award for 'Excellence in Financial Reporting' - another testimony of the quality of work we are doing, and our commitment to excellence in all areas of public service.

State Auditor Brian Sonntag came to Renton to commend the city on its long record of excellence.

We have worked hard to make it easier to do business with the government. Over 12% of our customers now pay their bills online.

We launched a new website featuring a modern design, new interactive elements, and more user-friendly content. We are streaming our video and cable programs online so you can watch Council meetings and other shows whenever you want from anywhere. We have added a new web calendar, and a subscription system that notifies users of updates. We have installed computer kiosks where residents have direct access and can pay their bills online, register for recreation programs, learn about our programs, and more. Rentonwa.gov had almost 895,000 page views this January compared to 243,000 in January 2006!

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

I've thought a lot about the decisions I've made over the years and the lessons I've learned.

There were things that didn't work out exactly as I had planned. What I feel good about is that I led from my heart.

### **Highlands**

Last year we put forth an aggressive plan for a re-vitalization strategy in the Highlands. I realize now that we tried to move too quickly. Although we had worked with the Highlands community for years, we didn't wait for the community to reorganize itself and fully participate in the process. The good news is we got back together, created a Highlands Task Force and are moving ahead with a consensus agreement on rezoning. Terry Persson, President of the Highlands Community Association, told me that they applaud the city for engaging the community and seeking their input. We are looking forward to our partnership with the Highlands Community Association and together we will find solutions for the next phase of redevelopment.

### **Annexation**

Over the past few years we have worked hard as a city to assemble state and county funding options and plan for potential annexations. As a city we have determined that annexation is a choice of residents in our potential annexation areas; the city does not initiate annexations. There are 60,000 residents who live within Renton's potential annexation areas, and at some point they are likely to be served by our city. We are facing a series of tough decisions to determine how the city's future growth will happen and whether those areas will be part of that growth.

The challenge is not over and sincere residents in those areas contribute to our local economy and use our services, we must continue discussions about annexation over the next few years.

We have two choices. In order to take advantage of state funding that is available for a limited time, we can begin the process of annexation by 2010. Or without any funding, we can decide to accept areas into our city slowly and over a greater period of time. We must also evaluate the pros and cons of increasing our population base. We have seen that larger cities in our region carry more clout and are able to influence regional spending decisions on transportation and other infrastructure projects.

### **Airport**

Way back in 2001, through years of work with the community and the Renton Airport Advisory Council, we started discussions on the future of the airport.

However, when several flights were diverted to Renton Airport due to maintenance work at Boeing Field last year, Renton Airport caught the attention of several others in our community.

We realize now that our work is not over. We need to continue the process and do our due diligence, emphasize neighborhood outreach and communication, and work with key stakeholders such as the FAA and our neighbors in Mercer Island. By taking more time we hope to make optimal decisions for the community and for the airport.

### **Moving Ahead**

I said earlier – the future is here. But there is much work to be done to preserve this future.

We need to be able to tell our community what we are providing them for their tax dollars.

And whether they are getting value for their investment. We have been guided by our vision – “Renton the center of opportunity in the Puget Sound region ....”

I have asked staff to establish core services reflective of this vision.

Let me share with you a few key initiatives planned this year within these core services

### **Public Safety**

Last year’s storms were a wake-up call for all of us. We learned three things from our experience - Be Prepared, Be Prepared, Be Prepared.

A prepared community is a safe community!

We added a new Emergency Preparedness Director who will be joining us soon. One of his or her first tasks will be to launch a community preparedness campaign. Each person in Renton should be prepared to last three days without electricity and with enough food and water. We are asking citizens to participate in an emergency preparedness exercise and spend three days living off their own supplies this summer! So this August, get your tents out and get ready to go camping.

The Community Emergency Response Team, known as CERT, is a group of volunteers trained to assist during major emergencies. We are in the midst of our third CERT training. It is our goal to have at least one CERT in every neighborhood in the city.



We heard you when you told us that you were concerned about traffic safety and people who run through red lights. We plan to implement a new traffic enforcement system to monitor drivers running red lights at intersections. This system is successfully being used in many communities.

There is nothing more important than ensuring the safety of our kids and schools. We have worked with the Renton School District to install flashing beacon systems and radar speed signs at several area elementary schools and will complete installation at all schools in 2007 and 2008.

We are also working with the Renton School District to identify school walkway routes and improve the safety along these routes.

### **Community and Economic Development**

Earlier I had talked about the Events Center. I know this is on everybody's minds so let's talk about our next steps.

I believe the "No New Taxes" proposal laid out for the Legislature is sound, reasonable, and worthy of broad support.

But I also need to evaluate the true economic impact. We are conducting an economic evaluation to determine the potential revenues before we can consider the possibility of city investment in this multi-purpose events center.

I have also engaged the community and have had several discussions with community leaders and stakeholders.

We are also committed to working with the neighborhoods that would be most impacted by the development.

In order for us to determine if it makes sense for Renton, we need to have an open and honest dialog with the City Council and the community to consider the opportunities and impacts.

It will take a number of months to get the information we need to make an informed decision.

We just got the great news that the King County Council decided unanimously to build a consolidated facility for its Elections Division, here in Renton. This means that at least 60 full time jobs, plus several hundred temporary jobs are headed to Renton late this year.

This process started more than a year ago, when our Economic Development staff contacted Councilmember Dunn and Pattersons' offices, and suggested that they look at existing office buildings in Renton rather than build a new building in Downtown Seattle. By moving to this location on Grady Way, the county elections staff will be in a terrific central location that they can occupy quickly. And they will be saving the King County taxpayers more than \$5 million.

Downtown Renton is the heart and soul of our city. By making the right investments for downtown we are laying a solid foundation for its future enhancement and vitality. This year we shall implement a new 'way-finding' project to encourage shoppers and visitors to explore all that downtown Renton has to offer. We are also evaluating transportation options and looking at ways to connect our downtown to other parts of the city.

## **Culture and Leisure**

We have expanded our popular aquatics programs by adding lights at the pool and increasing our hours of operation.

We have begun work on a master plan for the Renton libraries, completed our tri-park master plan, and will begin a master plan for the Renton Museum.

Our sister city program continues to be strong. We have two sister cities, Nishiwaki, Japan, and Cuatla, Mexico. We are exploring a new sister city relationship with Linyi in China.

For the first time this year, we participated in the One Night Count program to count the number of homeless in Renton - a first step to end homelessness in our city. The City Council recently adopted the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.

When Hippocrates said that 'walking is man's best medicine' he had no idea that we would take his advice literally to create a healthy community in Renton. We are creating a Healthy Community Trail map that shows the various beautiful trails in our city and gives people the incentive to get out there and walk!

This year is the 22nd year of Renton River Days. Our theme this year is 'Discover the heart of Renton'.

We recognize that quality of life is important to Renton residents and continue to work hard to make Renton a great place to live.

## **Environmental Protection**

Al Gore said recently " We are facing a global climate crisis. It is deepening. We are entering a period of consequences."

We have started work on Renton's Urban Forestry Program to conduct an inventory of our trees and assess their conditions.

Trees are the lungs of our cities. By taking care of our trees we do our part to help reduce the impacts of greenhouse gases.

Renton is also taking local action to help reduce global warming. We are getting our own house in order, and are setting an example for the region and the community so that together we can make a difference. We are getting a hybrid boom truck and the world's first hybrid aid vehicle. The future is here, RIGHT NOW.

## **Transportation**

We are about to see some of the most significant transportation investments since the freeway system was built 50 years ago.

Several of Renton's priorities are on the list for voters to consider this November – a \$1.2 billion proposal for I-405 from Renton to Bellevue, \$410 million for SR 167 and \$380 million for the SR 167/I-405 HOV to HOV connection.

I had mentioned earlier that we had started discussions on the future of the airport. In partnership with the City of Mercer Island, we will be working on a jointly funded airport noise study. We will also be exploring improvements to flight approach patterns with the FAA.

Representative and Transparent Government

People of Renton deserve an accountable government that gets things done. An efficient and effective government.

In the next few months we will roll out a results-based outcome management system that will help us align our investments of resources with desired results.

## Conclusion

2007 promises to be very exciting and maybe a little chaotic.

But if the past has taught us anything, it is this: every action of the people of Renton and its government has a consequence...

Every investment we make in Renton gives hope to a working family, and helps to build an entire neighborhood.

Every tree we plant...

Every crime we prevent...

Every street or sidewalk we repair...

Every new business we attract to our city...

Every tax dollar we respect...

Every public meeting we hold...

Each and every act we take – as a city and as individuals – is connected to our larger, shared future.

Each of these investments, big or small, make Renton's future – bright and full of promise.

Nowadays, when I tell people that I am from Renton I get a round of applause. Let's all hold our heads up high and say – "I am proud to be from Renton."

The future is here! Let's all make sure that Renton will live up to the hope we have for our children.